

The President's Daily Brief

17 January 1970

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

There are more signs pointing to a major North Vietnamese offensive in northern Laos in the near future.
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Some opponents of the Thieu government are again trying to organize an antiregime coalition.
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Ethiopia [redacted] 50X1

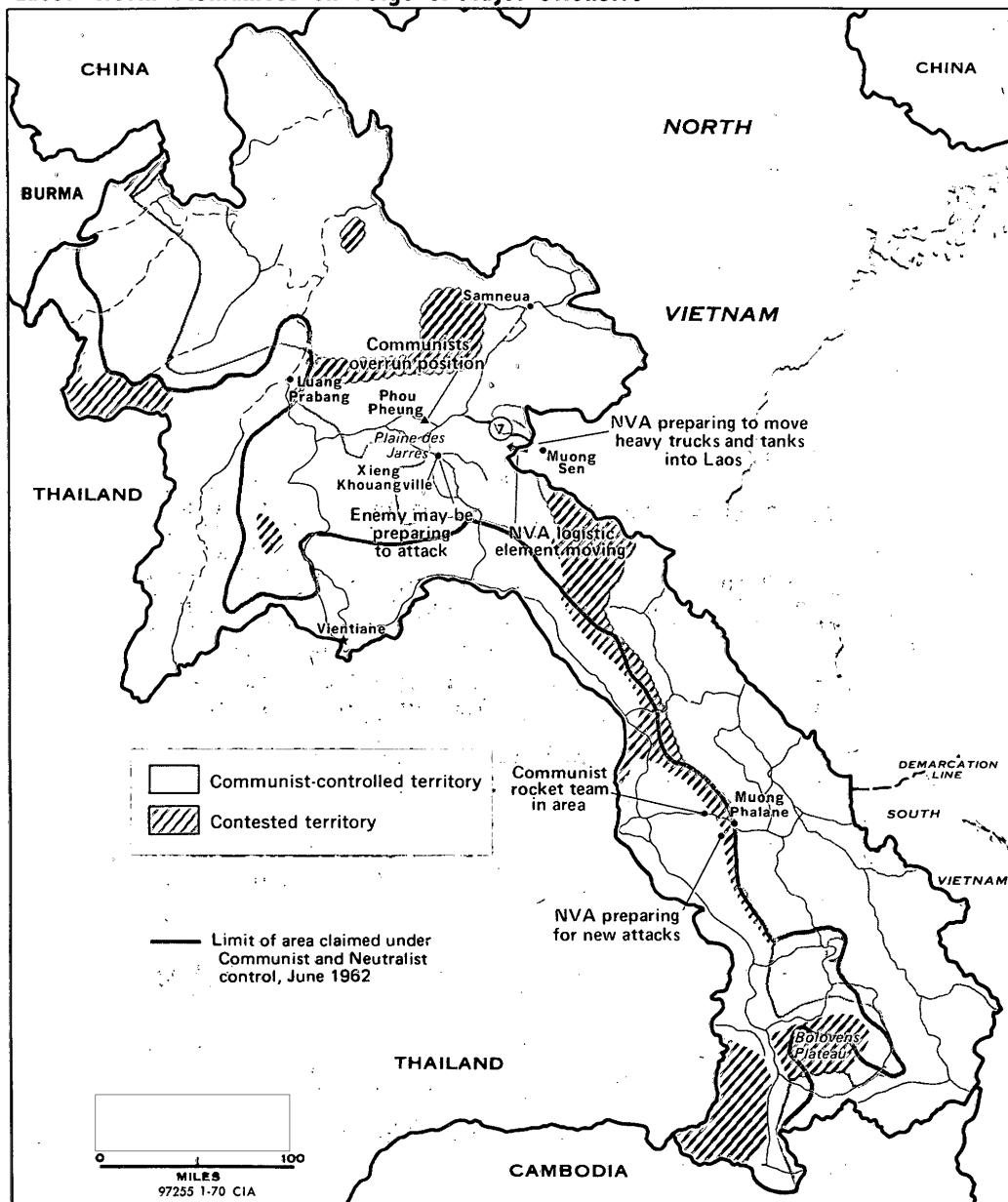
(Page 3)

Tensions between Venezuela and Guyana may grow again as Venezuela builds up its forces at the border.
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Peking is moving to take advantage of liberalized US trade controls.
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Laos: North Vietnamese on Verge of Major Offensive



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LAOS

There are more signs pointing to a major North Vietnamese offensive in northern Laos in the near future. Analysis of communications intelligence indicates that four major North Vietnamese tactical headquarters merged recently to form a more comprehensive command known as Military Region Xieng Khouang. The North Vietnamese have also moved a forward logistic headquarters into Laos and are preparing to send in additional heavy trucks and tanks.

The Communists probably decided that a consolidated command was necessary to coordinate the movement of the large number of North Vietnamese--upward of 17,000 combat and support troops--now operating in the northeast. The logistic move suggests that the North Vietnamese, confident that they have adequate stockpiles in Laos, are now concerned with moving these supplies to front line troops.

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The enemy's prime objective appears to be the attrition of government troops rather than the seizure of new territory. We also expect further rocketing of government installations in this area.

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SOUTH VIETNAM

Senator Tran Van Don, one of the government's most prominent and persistent critics, has announced the creation of a voting bloc in the National Assembly that he probably hopes will serve as the basis for a large political movement committed to support his own political ambitions. Don must run for re-election to the Upper House this fall, and he is probably looking toward the presidential elections next year.

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More effective political opposition to President Thieu has been prevented so far by the chronic failure of South Vietnam's numerous rival groups to subordinate parochial interests and rally around a leader acceptable to all. Don's initiative will only be successful to the degree that he can persuade the other opposition leaders that they can achieve power through cooperation, and that he has the best qualifications for providing the necessary leadership.

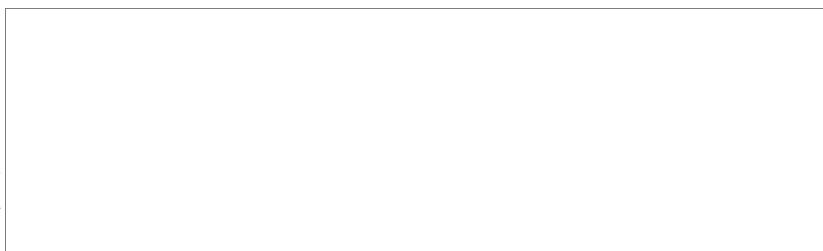
These traditional political jealousies will be most difficult to overcome. Don's efforts also seem timed to give the appearance that he is the acknowledged leader of South Vietnam's loyal opposition prior to his scheduled visit to the US next month. Don is convinced that he can play this role; we think his chances are poor at best.

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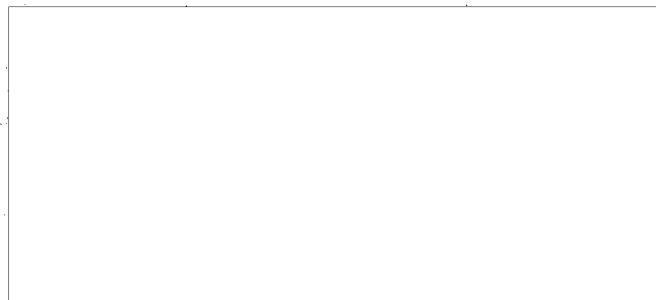
ETHIOPIA



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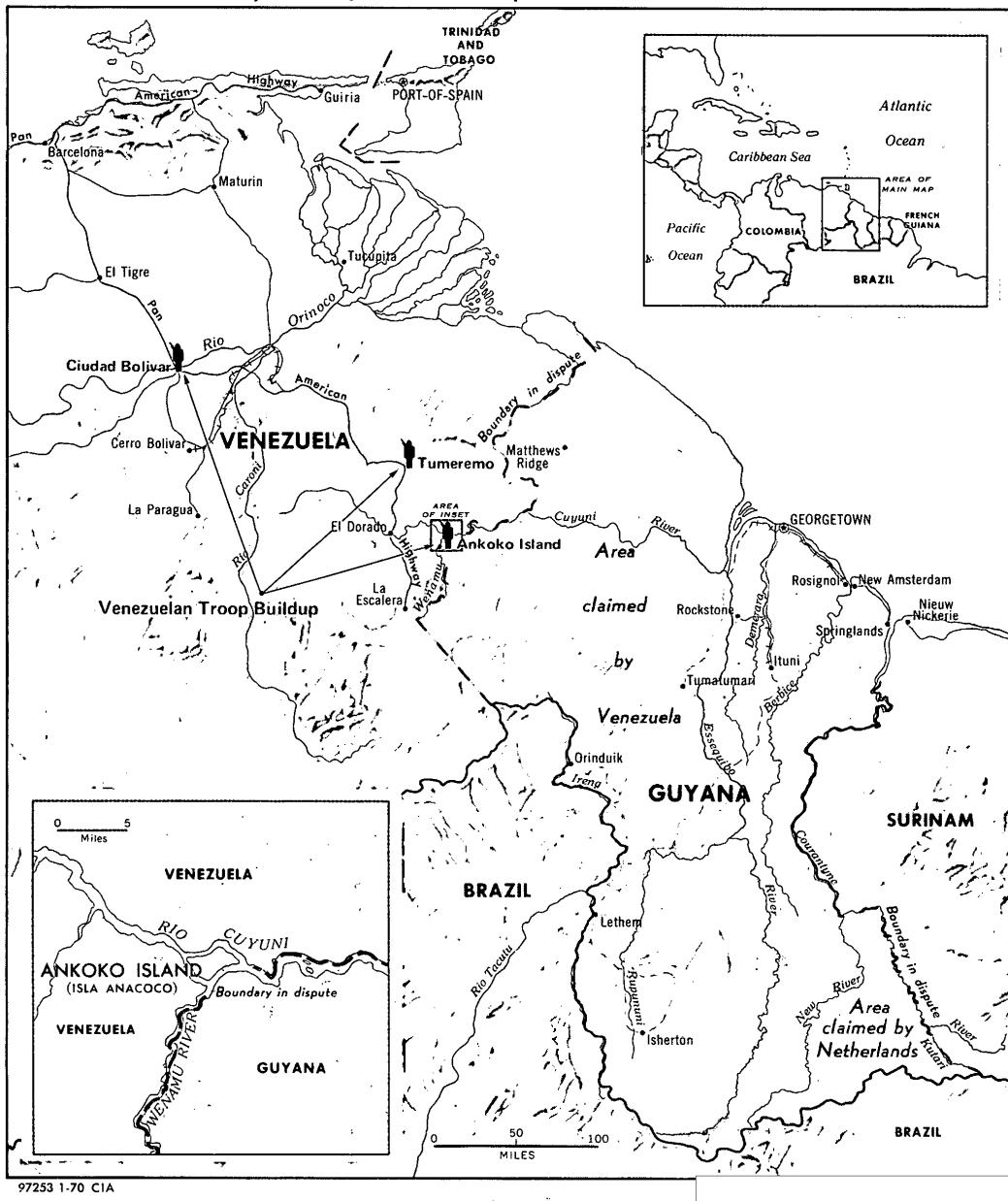
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Venezuela Builds Up Military Forces on Guyanese Border



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NOTES

Venezuela-Guyana: Tensions between the two countries may again increase as Venezuela builds up its forces at the border.

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the troop buildup could give rise to border incidents, a development to which the more jingoistic Venezuelans might not be averse.

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Communist China - US: Peking is moving to take advantage of liberalized US trade controls.

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Chinese attempts to increase sales to American tourists in Hong Kong have met with some success. Peking also has expanded its English language advertising aimed at US tourists in Japan.

Libya: The military Revolutionary Command Council is tightening its control of the government. Junta leader Qaddafi yesterday was named prime minister, replacing a civilian. Qaddafi also assumed the defense portfolio and named four other council members to key cabinet posts, including the Ministry of Interior. The remainder of the posts are held by civilians, some of whom were members of the previous government. By assuming control of government operations as well as policy, Qaddafi and his associates have removed what opposition there was to a pro-Egyptian policy.

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